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## SOME UNDISTINGUISHED NEGROES

JUAN BAUTISTA CESAR

A few years ago a bookseller handed me a book of MSS. papers for classification. I noted that they belonged to some military court or the archives of a Spanish Audiencia having jurisdiction in New Spain. Most of them had something to do with Texas when it was part of Mexico and belonged to the kingdom of Spain. These papers were of the highest historical value in so far as Texas was concerned. My curiosity was aroused by the original transcript of a court martial called upon to judge the transgressions of the Anglo-Americans, as they were called in those days. From these papers Philip Nolan, around whom a halo of false patriotism still lingers, was nothing more or less in the judgment of the court martial than a horse thief. It was the practice of Nolan, Bean, Fero and others to make periodical incursions across the State and stampede home, domestic, and wild horses for their mutual benefit. On this occasion the Spaniards were prepared for the malefactors and when surrounded in their provisional fort they refused at first to surrender, but the killing of Nolan put an end to all resistance and Elias Bean, David Fero and the Negro Cesar were put in St. Charles jail to await the slow machinery of the Spanish courts. Bean and Fero attempted to escape from the jail. One of these patriots became intimate with the jailer's wife and his intercepted notes showed him a depraved specimen of humanity. Among the papers examined was a deposition of Nolan's slave known in the histories of Texas by the name of Cesar, under the Spanish correct form he takes the proper name of Juan Bautista Cesar, a native of Grenada, when the island belonged to France. He was a professed Christian belonging to the Roman Catholic faith. So that during the dawn of the inci-

pient difficulties surrounding Texas, therefore, when becoming part of the United States, there figured a Negro the tool of his master, in common with Nolan and others, reputed horse thieves, the patriots whose depredations were as annoying to the Mexicans in 1804 as Villa's bandit incursions (during 1914-20) are reprehensible to Americans.

The manuscript follows:

*Juan Bautista Cesar.*

En el referido Presidio de San Carlos en el mismo dia, mes y año arriba citado el nominado Sr. Capitán hizo comparacer ante si al Interprete José Jesús de los Santos y al Negro Juan Bautista, conocido con el nombre de Cesar á quienes juramento en debida forma ante mí el Escribano y bajo lo cual prometió el primero traducir fielmente lo que declara et expresáda Juan Bautista y este decir verdad en lo que supiere y fuere preguntado y siendo por su Nombre, y Patria y Religión. Dijo que se llama Juan Bautista Cesar, que es natural de las islas Francesas que llaman la Granada y que es Católico Apostolico Romano.

Preguntado si sabe porqué está preso: dijo. Que sabe se haya preso por haber acompañado á su amo Dn. Felipe Nolan en la entrada que hizo á la Provincia de Texas.

Preguntado si no ha habido algun noevo motivo para que la prision se le agrave; Dijo que no sabe si habia habido algun motivo para tenerlo en el calabozo en donde ahora existe privandolo del alivio que ántes disfrutaba de tener todo el Presidio por Cárcel.

Preguntado que es lo que sabe de la fuga que intentaron hacer los Anglo-Americanos compañeros de Nolan. Dijo; Que la fuga si la intentaron los, Anglo Americanos se la han ocultado al declarante pues jámas le han comunicado cosa alguna relativa á ella y antes bien ha observado que cuando hablan entre sí los expresados Anglo-Americanos y el declarante se presenta, luego callan y solo continuan hablando cosas diferentes: que el día que pusieron al que declara en el calabozo en union de Elias Bean y David Fero oyo el declarante que David pregunto a Elias que si habia escrito alguna carta á Chihuahua y respondiendole Elias que si, le contestó David ya verás como por eso nos ponen en el calabozo y te apostara una oreja que es asi; que nada mas has oido ni visto nunca sobre la fuga de que se trata: Que el declarante desde que se murió su amo Nolan siempre ha sido mirado con desprecio por los Anglo-Americanos

compañeros de aquel y por lo mismo le ha quadrado mas alojarse siempre con los Españoles como se verificó cuando lo pusieron en el calabozo que dormia con tres de los Españoles.

Preguntado si sabe o ha oídos que lesl Anglo-Americanos tuviesen prevenidas Armas y municiones de boca y guerra para meditar su fuga intentarla: Dijo que nada sabe sobre lo que contiene la Pregunta, no ha oido cosa alguna sobre el particular.

Preguntado si tiene algo mas que declarar sobre el particular: Dijo que no tiene mas que declarar sobre el particular y que lo dicho es la verdad a cargo del juramento que lleva hecho en que se afirmó y ratificó despues de enterado por el Interprete de lo que contiene esta su declarencion y por no saber escribir pusieron ambos la señar de cruz firmando dicho señor y el presente Escribano.

(Firmado) Texada                      X                      X                      Ante mi Jose Cano

Provincia de la Nueve Vizcaya Año de 1804. Diligencias prac-  
ticadas de órden del Sr. Comandants General en la Fuga que in-  
tentaron hacer los Anglo-Americanos. Comisionado el Capiten Dn  
Antonio Carcia de Texada.

ARTHUR A. SCHOMBURG.

#### A BENEVOLENT SLAVEHOLDER OF COLOR

John Barry Meachum, a free man of color, became prominent as pastor of the African Baptist Church at St. Louis. Meachum was born a slave, but obtained his liberty by his own industry. By his hard earnings he purchased his father, a slave, and Baptist preacher in Virginia. He was then a resident of Kentucky, where he married a slave, and where he professed religion.

Soon thereafter his wife's master removed to Missouri, and Meachum followed her, arriving at St. Louis, with three dollars, in 1815. Being a carpenter and a cooper, he soon obtained employment, purchased his wife and children, commenced preaching, and was ordained in 1825. During subsequent years he purchased, including adults and children, about twenty slaves, but he never sold them again. His method was to place them in service, encourage them to form habits of industry and economy, and when they had paid for themselves, he set them free. In 1835 he built a

steamboat, which he provided with a library, and from which he excluded the use and sale of intoxicating drinks. He was then worth about \$25,000.

He was not less enterprising in religious matters. The church of which he was pastor, consisted of about 220 members of whom 200 were slaves. A large Sabbath school, a temperance society, a deep-toned missionary spirit, good order and correct habits among the slave population in the city, strict and regular discipline in the church, were among the fruits of his arduous, persevering labor.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Liberator*, December 10, 1836.